

Amendments to the Specification

Please amend the Specification as follows:

In the Section titled "Brief Description of the Several Views of the Drawings," please add the following paragraphs after Paragraph 30:

-- FIG. 7 depicts a negotiable instrument issued in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 8 depicts a negotiable instrument issued in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 9 depicts a negotiable instrument issued in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention. --

Please amend Paragraph [0034] as follows:

-- [[In the preferred]] Referring to Fig. 7, in an embodiment of the present invention, the teller is presented a check 10 by an individual, which is supposedly the payee. The individual presents the endorsed check 10 to the teller along with the appropriate conventional identification materials such as a driver's license or an employee badge. This information is visually compared to the payee identification information 15 that is printed on the check 10 to determine authenticity. If the comparison fails, the payee's endorsement fails. If the comparison is valid, then the check's endorsement is accepted and consideration is given to the payee.--

Please amend Paragraph [0035] as follows:

--[[In an alternate]] Referring to Figs 8 and 9, in another embodiment, the presented check's printed payee identification information is in machine-readable data rather than, or in addition to, human-readable information as previously described. This machine-readable data can take the forms, for example, of magnetic ink character recognition fonts, optical character recognition fonts 20, or bar coded fonts 25. This machine-readable data allows the teller to

directly enter that information via the terminal device though means of an interfaced reader/scanner device such as magnetic ink character recognition, optical character recognition and bar code readers, for example. Additional information inputs derived from the materials presented by the payee, such as a driver's license number, may also be scanned or key entered. The terminal device then accesses the storage database, which maintains the original payee identification information, which in turn retrieves the identification information and displays such information on the attached monitor screen for verification of the presented identification material. In addition to the foregoing, the amount of the check 30, 31 may also be key entered for verification purposes. The screen display may show additional alerts and warnings that are applicable to the specific check, such as, a duplicate check has been presented, the check amount does not match the issued check amount, the check has previously been paid, the check was never issued or was voided prior to issue, or the check was reported as stolen.--

Please amend Paragraph [0041] as follows:

-- Referring to FIGS. 2 and 4, which illustrates by means of a flow chart the preferred step-by-step process whereby checks are printed that contain the payee information derived from the payee information database that has been incorporated with the conventional check and check stub information. At a minimum, the printed check information will include conventional information, in human-readable form, such as the date of the check 35, the payee name 40, the check amount in numerals 30 and in words 31, the check serial number 45, the bank name 50 and address 55 that the check 10 is drawn on, and the signature 60 of the issuer. Alternately, the check may also contain machine readable MICR information 65 in conformance with American Bankers Association (ABA) published standards (ABA Publication 147R3--The Common Machine Language) that includes, for example, the routing/transit number of the paying bank 70,

the account number 75 of the issuer at the issuer's bank, and the check serial 45 or reference number. The MICR line information 65 may be printed at the same time the check is printed or it may have been preprinted at the time the check forms were initially manufactured. Further alternately, the information printed may be in machine-readable format, such as magnetic character recognition fonts, optical character recognition fonts, or bar-coded fonts. In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, the mass data storage device 150 containing the stored payee identification information is accessed by the central computer's circuitry during the conventional process of check printing 400. The conventional check information is extracted 405 from the information stored on the mass data storage device 220. The program then determines if payee identification information is available for the payee whose check is in the process of being printed 410. If not available, the conventional check format is printed 415 without any payee identification information. If the payee identification information is available as determined by accessing the mass data storage device 150, that digitized identification information is extracted 420, formatted and printed on the check [[420]] in addition to the conventional check contents. The printed payee identification information 15 may take other forms such as coded information, machine readable information, watermarked information or merely a printed logo or icon indication that alerts the teller to access alternate databases or that additional steps must be performed to verify the authenticity of the check's payee and/or the check amount. Furthermore, it may be desirable to only print selected portions of the stored payee identification information, or to print the complete payee identification information. Alternately, upon the creation and printing process of the checks, the printing process creates a unique identifier of the database location on the check, thus denoting to the teller the location of where the payee identification information may be retrieved when the check is presented for cashing. This unique database

location identifier may be, for example, a human-readable icon, logo, telephone number or Internet web site address which denotes the issuing bank's information or payee information database location. Still alternately, this unique database location identifier may take the form of machine-readable fonts. --

Please amend Paragraph [0045] as follows:

-- In an alternate embodiment of the present invention, a teller may not require the use of any equipment. The teller will perform the payee verification procedure by visual inspection of the payee identification information 15 printed on the check 10 as compared to that same physical identification information supplied by the individual attempting to present an endorsed check, such as presenting photo identification. --

Please amend Paragraph [0046] as follows:

-- Another alternate embodiment of the present invention includes a telephone 510 that allows the teller to use touch-tone entry via keypad or entry by audio command of the presented check's serial number 45. This, in turn, will access, through data transmission means, the appropriate database of issued check information provided by the check issuer. If a match is found between the entered check serial number 45, then the check amount 30, 31 and payee's name 40 may be displayed or spoken electronically by means of an audio response system or visual display device for teller verification. Upon satisfactory verification, the teller then responds by key entry or voice entry to indicate the check 10 will be cashed and the issued check database will be updated to reflect that the check has been successfully cashed. As such, that specific check serial number 45 is now void for future presentments. If a matching serial number cannot be found on the database or a match is made but the check has been flagged as lost, stolen

or previously paid, an appropriate response is provided to alert the teller that there is a possibility of a fraudulent check being presented. --

Please amend Paragraph [0047] as follows:

--Paragraph [0047] should read: --In an alternate embodiment of the present invention, the telephone 510 key entry or voice entry is replaced by a MICR reader/scanner 520, interfaced to the telephone connection 525, that has the circuitry to read the data printed on the check's MICR line 65, to access a central computer host processor and to perform data transfers to and from the central computer. This standard information consists of the paying bank's routing/transit number 70, the account number 75 at the paying bank and the check serial number 45. This data provides sufficient keys to locate the appropriate issuer's database and to search that database for a matching check serial number. Alternately, other similar devices may read or scan machine readable data comprised of different fonts and media 540 that were printed on the check in a coded form, for example optical character recognition (OCR) 20 or the various bar code 25 configurations that will allow automated reading of the data printed on the check when read or scanned with a compatible reader or scanning device which thus denotes the payee identification information database location. Still alternately, devices can be utilized to read transparent or watermark data embedded into the check. --

Please amend Paragraph [0052] as follows:

--In another alternate embodiment of the present invention, other scanner devices may be employed that can read and/or scan other types of media and fonts, such as OCR 20 and bar code 25, for example. The teller and database access operations described above will be identical, with the exception that the check will contain printed OCR 20 or bar code 25 information in addition to the standard MICR information 65. Other data elements may also be included in combination

with the other fonts that allow valuable ancillary capabilities to be performed using the issuer's paid check records for example including a code that gives the ability to signal the teller that the check may be truncated, i.e. not sent forward for entry into the check clearing process, and to then generate an electronic check record that will subsequently be debited to the issuer's bank account electronically. Since many of the advanced models of scanners have the ability to digitize and store the front and back images of the presented check for subsequent research purposes, many other similar types of check truncation opportunities will be enabled under the present invention. --